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Spring 2007

# News and Views, Spring 2007

West Virginia Autism Training Center

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# The West Virginia Autism Training Center

[www.marshall.edu/coe/atc](http://www.marshall.edu/coe/atc)

Spring/Summer 2007

at  MARSHALL UNIVERSITY  
Huntington, WV

## From the Director



### Barbara Becker-Cottrill, Ed.D.

The release of the autism surveillance data by the Centers for Disease Control showing that approximately 1 in every 150 children born in 1992 and 1994 had an ASD was alarming but certainly not unexpected. Some may not know that the WV Autism Training Center (WV ATC) had the CDC grant for the surveillance of autism in West Virginia. Through this work, we were anticipating a high prevalence rate but we also had a pretty good idea from our own agency data that Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) were on the rise. In 1990, the WV ATC registered 25 new families with children with ASDs for services. By 1996 that number jumped to nearly 100 new families in a year and by 2005, 152 new families registered in a one year period. I know we are all concerned about the reasons for this increase that is now firmly documented across many areas in the United States. But equally as important is the here and now and the future of the children and the well being of their families. Federal legislation addressing these issues is on the horizon. We must pay attention to the issues affecting our families and children now and ensure our children are receiving the educational opportunities they need and deserve. In a nutshell, that is the mission of the WV ATC.

Our mission is an ambitious one. We know we cannot be with every child all the time but we know we can empower the people who are. We have learned that the best outcomes for children are achieved when we work with teams who equally develop and take ownership of a support plan for the child. We know it is one thing to hear about a "best practice" but quite another to adapt and implement it for a specific individual. That is a big part of the mission of the WV ATC. Through the collective expertise of a team of family members, community professionals, school system educators and administrators, friends and neighbors, lives change. I think you will find this theme in many of the articles and stories in this edition of our newsletter.

The contributions of our families, staff and a new column by the chairwoman of our advisory board, Jeannie Elkins, are very much appreciated. It is an honor to work with the dedicated and determined staff of the WV ATC and to know such wonderful moms, dads, siblings, grandparents, educators and administrators. Most of all, it is a deep honor to know so many determined West Virginia children and adults with ASDs.



## My Three Sons

by Cindy Puskas, Parent

My husband and I are the proud parents of three handsome, intelligent, humorous and amazing boys. Our sons are Derek (age 10), Tyler (age 8), and Tanner (age 2).

Recently, the government announced that autism occurs in 1 out of 150 children. Two of these children are mine. Derek and Tyler were diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome in June, 2006.

The diagnosis for us was a relief. It gave us more insight and understanding as to some of the behaviors, as well as the struggles that the children deal with everyday. After the initial relief of diagnosis, I went through a type of grieving process. I couldn't believe that the boys were 9 and 7 and we were just getting this diagnosis. Everything you read about autism says early intervention is best. We had missed this window of opportunity by a long shot. I was almost in a panic to try and find intervention and find it fast.

One of my first calls was to the Autism Training Center. I was given the much needed support and information that I was in need of. I began the process of educating myself and figuring out which direction to head. I took the Autism Mentor Training classes and read as much as I could.

At the same time that we were going through the process of diagnosis with our oldest two sons, our youngest, who was 18 months at the time, had lost some language. At 15 months he had around 20 words. By the age of 18 months he was down to 5 words. He had poor joint attention and his play skills consisted of dumping everything on the floor. I called Birth to Three for Tanner to

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## My Three Sons

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see how they might help us. Literally the day after diagnosis of Derek and Tyler, I was sitting in my living room with an intake coordinator from Birth to Three picking out different developmental specialists, a speech therapist, and an occupational therapist to evaluate my baby. This was a very stressful time for us but we pushed through.

During the summer months we were taking Derek and Tyler to both speech and occupational therapy and Tanner was receiving services from Birth to Three. This was in addition to swimming lessons and our normal summer activities.

When school started back I came to the realization that I could not keep up all of the commitments of traveling for therapy for Derek and Tyler after school, the steady flow of therapists in and out of the home with Tanner, as well as, working from home. I had to sit down and reevaluate my priorities. What was important for each of my children as individuals and our family as a whole? It was critical that Tanner continue with early intervention but I scheduled it to make it more practical for our routine.

I pursued evaluations for speech and occupational therapy through the school system for Derek and Tyler. Tyler was already receiving speech therapy but needed modifications to his IEP.

Upon taking inventory of each child's individual needs, I felt that what was most important for Derek and Tyler were developing better social skills. By social skills, I mean not only "socializing" with friends but also communicating and relating with others, both verbally and nonverbally. The boys also needed to learn the "hidden curriculum" of our culture. That is, to under-

stand what is and is not appropriate to say or do, as well as the unwritten rules of society that most people know but were never taught. In order to work with Derek and Tyler on social skills, we now attend a pilot social skills club called the Break-Ins through the Autism Training Center. We meet with a group of kids every other week to work on understanding and learning how to better communicate and interact with peers and adults as well. The boys look forward to their meetings. I have to admit, I really enjoy it too. They are not only having fun but also learning and growing. We provide other opportunities for them to implement what they learn in our club in the community, at home, and at school.



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People will sometimes say things to me like, "I don't know how you do it," or "You really have your hands full." To this I say, if you think my hands are full, you should see my heart. I am so fortunate to have such awesome kids.

Sometimes we have meltdowns all at once. Multiply a meltdown times 3 and it can be a challenge, but for every challenge I think there is a benefit. This keeps me on my toes and always thinking ahead. As the children are getting older, things seem to be getting a little easier. When I was dealing with two preschoolers at once, it was not exactly a walk in the park.

There are also those embarrassing moments like when they say things that you and I think but know not to say. It is almost

like the brutal honesty of a 5-year-old, only they aren't 5 anymore. It is quite an uneasy feeling you get when your mother is trying on a new outfit she just bought and asks your opinion of it and your son so boldly states, "That outfit makes you look fat Grandma." I'll take those uneasy moments though because all in all, I have three kids who make me laugh daily. They really are a lot of fun. I mean how many moms are awakened from an afternoon nap by their 10-year old saying, "Excuse me, Mom. Could you please get me a wrench so that I can put together my hydrogen rocket?"

We have watched all three boys make some amazing transformations over the past few months. Derek and Tyler are really coping so much better with life at home and school. The boys have had some incredible teachers along the way who were doing all the right things even before the diagnosis was made and the IEP modifications. I believe the diagnosis just gave us a better understanding and a direction in which to go. The support that we have received from the principal, teachers and staff at the school has been overwhelming. They really just want to do what is best for the children and they have come up with some terrific plans to help them.

Over the past few months we have also watched Tanner's development take off. His language has just sky rocketed. The therapists and service coordinator from Birth to Three can't believe the changes since last summer. I don't know why he lost language or what was going on, but it sure makes you grateful for every developmental milestone they make. You learn to celebrate every accomplishment your children make and isn't that what life is about?

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## My Three Sons

Continued from Page 1

You celebrate the little moments and focus on the positive.

I can honestly say that I have learned more from them than they will ever learn from me. A few years ago, we were having a hard time getting Tyler to sleep in his bed. He would only sleep on the floor. I asked him one night, "Tyler, why won't you sleep in your bed? You have a nice bed." Tyler told me, "I can only be me." What an inspiring moment for me.

Autism does not define my children; it is part of who they are. I just feel like they are such special boys and I am blessed to be their mother.

They are ...

*Always*

*Unique*

*Totally*

*Interesting and*

*Sometimes*

*Mysterious ...*

but above all else, they are our boys, and we would not have them any other way.



**GIVE NOW !**

Donations to support the Autism Training Center can be made on-line at:

[www.marshall.edu/coe/atc](http://www.marshall.edu/coe/atc)

## Making Sense of Hidden Curriculum

By Brenda Smith Myles and Katie Bassity  
University of Kansas

Impairment in social interaction is a central characteristic of students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Although challenges with relating to and interacting with others are manifested differently in each individual, there is universal recognition that social problems dramatically impact daily life in home, school, and community. Children and youth with ASD are often routine bound and rule enforcers. Social skills, however, are governed by flexible guidelines, which differ across communicative partners and environments. For example, how a child might greet a friend looks and sounds differently than how a student might greet a teacher, making this and similar social skills difficult to generalize. One skill area, the hidden curriculum, addresses these social inconsistencies and, thus, is an essential social skill for individuals with AS. This article provides the reader with a general overview of the hidden curriculum, hidden curriculum items, and strategies to put them into practice.

### Defining the Hidden Curriculum

The hidden curriculum is important social rules and expectations that everyone is expected to know, but no one is taught. This includes unspoken rules, adult or peer expectations, idioms, and metaphors. Every culture has its own hidden curriculum, although there may be items that are common across cultures. Understanding the hidden curriculum is difficult for everyone, but even more so when associated with a deficit in social interactions.

The following example of Charlie illustrates the difficulty students with Asperger Syndrome have with understanding the hidden curriculum:

*Charlie was a popular eighth grader, despite his social awkwardness. His peers accepted him and were understanding of his diagnosis. One day Charlie was hanging out with his friends in the hall before class. Matthew began cursing in frustration with his B in social studies. Charlie picked up on the cursing and associated it with frustration. The bell rang and Charlie went on to his next class. As he sat down, Charlie realized that he left his math book in the locker. His teacher, Mr. Way would not let him go back to his locker, and immediately Charlie got upset and began to curse. Mr. Way sent Charlie to the principal's office, leaving Charlie confused about what he did wrong.*

He thought it was okay to use curse words when he was frustrated at school. Charlie did not understand the hidden curriculum – as true for most adolescents – cursing may be acceptable around peers, but you should never curse when an adult is present.

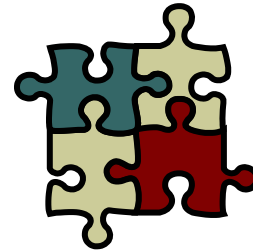
There is no one comprehensive list of all hidden curriculum items. Table 1 provides a brief listing of hidden curriculum items that may be applicable to children and youth with ASD in home, school, and community settings. Not all hidden curriculum items are listed and there are many more to be discovered as social situations occur.

Instruction of hidden curriculum items will help children and youth with AS makes sense of their world. Parents, teachers, and other caregivers can teach these hidden curriculum items if equipped with appropriate strategies to use. The following paragraphs detail some instructional and interpretive strategies to teach the hidden curriculum. Instructional strategies that have been used with

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## Making Sense of Hidden Curriculum

*Continued from Page-2*



to teach hidden curriculum items include direct instruction, social narratives, the Power Card Strategy, and cartooning. The goal of these instructional strategies is to foster competence, self-awareness, self-calming, self-confidence, and self-management when encountering the hidden curriculum.

### Direct Instruction

Children and adolescents with ASD do not always “pick up” or naturally understand the hidden curriculum necessary in the home, school, and community environments. It then becomes important that the parents and teachers provide direct instruction to help the individual learn these skills. The One a Day method is an effective means of teaching the hidden curriculum. For example, the classroom teacher writes one hidden curriculum item on the whiteboard each morning and introduces this item to students as a first activity. Once students understand the hidden curriculum item, they are asked to indicate how it will impact them at school or at home (Myles, Trautman, & Schelvan, 2004).

### Social Narratives

Social narratives or brief stories about a hidden curriculum item can be written by parents or teachers. Written at a level the child can easily understand and often using pictures or photographs as visual aids, social narratives can promote self-awareness, self-calming, and self-management. Minimal guidelines exist for creating social narratives other than to ensure that the content matches individual needs and takes the child’s perspective into account. The most often used social narrative is Social Stories™ (Gray, 1995).

### Power Cards

The Power Card Strategy was developed by Gagnon (2001) to assist individuals with ASD in understanding social situations, routines, meaning of language, and the hidden curriculum. This strategy takes advantage of a child’s hero or special interest to increase the child’s interest and motivation. It consists of two parts – a brief story using the child’s special interest and hero in a situation that is difficult for the child himself, and the actual Power Card. The Power Card is the size of a trading card and includes a picture of the child’s special interest or hero and appropriate steps for the child to take in a given situation.

### Cartooning

Cartooning has been used with individuals with ASD. Comic Strip Conversations™, a type of cartooning developed by Gray (1995), promotes social understanding through the use of simple figures in a cartoon-like format. Adults can use cartoons to draw social situations, either real or imagined, that can help students understand the hidden meanings in conversations.

### Summary

Understanding the hidden curriculum is not specific to children with ASD, however, their impairments in social interactions put them at a disadvantage. To overcome these problems, it is important that as parents and educators, we are equipped with strategies to help individuals with ASD make sense of the hidden curriculum.

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## Making Sense of Hidden Curriculum *Continued from Page-3*

### Sample Hidden Curriculum Items

- ❖ Treat all authority figures with respect (i.e. police, firefighters). You would not address a police person like you would your brother.
- ❖ Not all people you are unfamiliar with are strangers you can't trust. You may not know your bus driver or your police person, but these are people who help you.
- ❖ What may be acceptable at your house, may not be acceptable at a friend's house. For example, although it is acceptable to put your feet up on the table at home, your friend's mom may be upset if you do that in their home.
- ❖ People do not always want to know the honest truth, even when they ask. Your best friend does not want to hear that she looks fat in a new dress she just bought for the high school dance.
- ❖ Teachers do not have the same rules. One teacher may allow gum in the classroom, while the other gives out fines for chewing gum.
- ❖ If you hear someone say something that is not grammatically correct you do not need to tell him every time. He may think you are being rude or trying to make him feel stupid.
- ❖ When a teacher gives you a warning, it means that she wants the behavior to stop and that most likely there will be a consequence if the behavior occurs again.
- ❖ It is impolite to interrupt someone when talking, unless it is an emergency.
- ❖ Acceptable slang that may be used with your peers, i.e., dawg, phat, may not be acceptable when interacting with adults.
- ❖ When the teacher is scolding another student, it is not the best time to ask the teacher a question.
- ❖ Take a shower and put on deodorant and clean clothes every morning. It makes you smell good and makes it easier for other people to be around you.
- ❖ People are not always supposed to say what they are thinking.

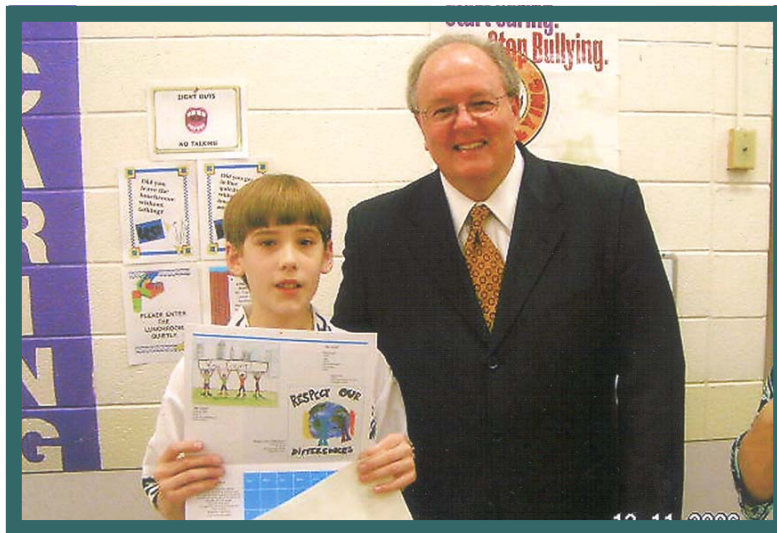
# Congratulations!

Matthew and Jacob Eubank of Cowen, participated in the Webster County Health Fair held at Glade Elementary. The boys were happy to distribute autism awareness literature, show informational DVD's on the laptop and most importantly, share their dreams



# Congratulations!

## Character Education Calendar Winner!



Zach Estel, a 5<sup>th</sup> grader & Dr. Steven Paine, State Superintendent at Paden City Elementary in Wetzel County

Zach Estel, a 5<sup>th</sup> grader at Paden City Elementary in Wetzel County attended the awards ceremony on December 11, 2006 as one of the winners of the Character Education Calendar contest. Over 1,000 entries were submitted state-wide, where entries were judged based on the message and design of artwork. Zach's message was "You Count!" Each winner signed a calendar beside their entry, which was delivered to First Lady Gail Manchin by state superintendent Dr. Steven Paine.



## MATH FIELD DAY!



Derek John Puskas, a 4<sup>th</sup> grader at Blackshere Elementary School won fourth place on Math Field Day! Derek is 10 years old.



**Does My Child Need a Mentor?**

by Jean Hardman and Ivan Swanson, Education Specialists Senior

The "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA) mandates that supplementary aids and services be provided to students with disabilities to promote inclusion with nondisabled students in academic, extracurricular, and non-academic activities. The IDEA requires the education system to identify the needed supports for a student with disabilities to participate in the general curriculum. The school uses the Individualized Education Program (IEP) as the vehicle to ensure the student is receiving the appropriate level of support for progress in the general curriculum.

For a student with autism, attending school can be a confusing, perplexing experience. To navigate their way and receive additional support, parents often think that having a Autism Mentor is the best possible support for their child. In West Virginia, an Autism Mentor (additional titles may be "paraprofessional," "paraeducator," and "classroom aide") is a school employee who provides instructional support services under the direct supervision of a qualified teacher. All parents want their child to have the individual support necessary for success, so an Autism Mentor appears to be the ideal. An Autism Mentor who functions as a valuable member of the IEP Team, who is trained in autism, and who promotes the student's independence describes the best case scenario. Autism Mentors can be vital members of the educational community and a necessary resource for students.

But do situations exist where having an Autism Mentor might hinder

the student's success? What could be the downside of having this kind of support for your child? Research has pointed to the potential damage to students when schools rely too much on the Autism Mentor (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland, 1997; Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999). These studies suggest that too much of a good thing can have far-reaching effects on the following:

- The classroom teacher's ability to assume ownership of the student's education.
- The frequency and types of peer interactions the student has, and the student's ability to become an independent learner. Autism Mentors often assume too much responsibility for the student, bond with the student to the point of becoming overprotective, inadvertently interfere with the student's social interaction goals, and are viewed by parents and educators as the student's primary teacher (Downing, Ryndak & Clark, 2000; French & Chopra, 1999).

How can a parent and school decide if a child requires an Autism Mentor and what level of support is needed? The first step is for the team to agree on the role and duties of the Autism Mentor. Some possible considerations include:

- Valuing the Autism Mentor as a vital part of the educational team
- Recognizing that the Autism Mentor is not a surrogate teacher
- Understanding Autism Mentor's duties are based on the student's individually identified support needs
- The Autism Mentor's overriding goal should be to promote interdependence, not a

dependent relationship

- The Autism Mentor should constantly assess the level of support/promoting provided and not do things for the student that he/she can do for themselves
- The Autism Mentor should focus on incorporating as many natural supports as possible
- The Autism Mentor should work toward providing active ties that will increase the student's social skills

Team members working through the IEP process might find the following chart helpful in determining a student's level of need:

<b>Answer the following questions for each class or activity:</b>	
1.	Is there a safety concern for self and others?
2.	Does the student require assistance with basic self help/daily living skills?
3.	In general, what prompting levels (verbal, gestural, physical) are needed for the student?
4.	What is the student's learning style, i.e. visual, auditory, and kinesthetic?
5.	Is the student receptive to peer tutoring and support?
6.	Do peers include the student in classroom activities?
7.	What activities can the student complete independently?
8.	In what activities does the student need support from the Autism Mentor? (be specific)

Needs must be clearly defined in order for parents, teachers, and Autism Mentors to ensure the correct level of support is provided.

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**Does My Child  
Need a Mentor?**

*Continued from Page-6*

Research indicates thoughtful assessment of the student's present level of need ensures the appropriate educational plan development, relieves parent anxiety, and allows the school system to more efficiently serve students.



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Mueller, P.H., Ed.D., (2002). The Paraeducator Paradox. *The Exceptional Parent Magazine*, 32 (9), 64-67.

**MOVING?**

**WE WANT TO KEEP IN CONTACT**

If you move or change your contact information, please don't forget to let the WVATC know.

Please call **1-800-344-5115** to make changes in your contact information.



**That's What Friends Are For**

by Erin Lash, Education Specialist Sr.



Phyllis Gray, Dillon's mother, meets Hayle Martin, peer tutor.

This past year, I had the pleasure and privilege to work with the Dillon Gray family in Oak Hill. Dillon is a fifth grade student at Collins Middle School where he is in Mr. Gary Bailey's classroom. Dillon attends art class, physical education and sign language class with his typical peers. He enjoys playing outside, swimming, dining at Bob Evan's Restaurant, going to church, watching movies and working on the computer.

Collins Middle School has an energetic atmosphere. Collins is a 1999 Blue Ribbon School and a 1997 School of Excellence. The school offers numerous activities including a peer mediator program. Students are nominated for the peer mediator program and evaluated by their teachers for inclusion in this program.

Miss Hayle Martin, a 13 year old seventh grade student is a member of the school's peer mediator program. This past year, Hayle assumed the role of peer mediator for Dillon. On her own, Hayle made a special effort to interact with Dillon and to promote peer interactions with Dillon, particularly in the lunchroom and on the playground. Hayle

takes the time to facilitate social interactions with Dillon and his middle school peers. Hayle, Dillon and the Collins Middle students talk at lunch time and engage in activities on the playground. Hayle says that Dillon loves to play basketball with his friends. Dillon's teacher, Mr. Gary Bailey, commends Hayle for her kindness and patience.

Hayle is a busy young lady. In addition to the peer mediator program, she is a member of the student council, pep club, marching band where she plays the saxophone and is an honor roll student. Hayle's life goal is to be a pediatrician. When asked about her role as peer mediator for Dillon, Hayle said, "I like it very much. I look forward to it each and every day when I come to school."

Phyllis Gray, Dillon's mother, says, "I am so grateful for what Hayle has done for my son."



**WVATC FAST FACTS**

- \*WV ATC serves the entire state of WV**
- \*WV ATC provides training in autism for approximately 1000 people annually**
- \*WV ATC services are at no cost to registered families**
- \*WV ATC, through Marshall University, provides autism teacher certification course-work**

## College Program for Students with Asperger's Syndrome

By Marc Ellison, College Program Coordinator

The Autism Training Center's College Program, which provides support services to enrolled students who have autism spectrum disorders, welcomed two new students for the Spring 2007 semester. The students—one from the mid-west, and the other a native West Virginian—applied to the College Program at Marshall University because they believed it provided for them an opportunity to successfully complete their goals regarding higher education.

The two new students joined eight others who recently completed the Fall 2006 semester on an exciting and successful note. The eight students enrolled in that semester, each going to school full-time, living on-campus and scheduled for full-time credit hours, earned an average of 2.65 GPA for the semester.

Kudos to each of the students for their diligent focus and hard



work! As is most often the case, the effort paid off!

The College Program for Students with Asperger's Syndrome supports students in learning skills that will help them earn a college degree, prepare for employment in their chosen field and live a life that is productive, independent and of quality. Through a person-centered, positive behavior support process used to assist participating students in planning for their college experience, the College Program assists enrolled students in

carrying out the activities necessary to meet their personal and academic goals. In collaboration with the student and other important team members, personal goals are identified and strategies are developed to address those needs. Typically, strategies are designed to support students socially, with identified communication needs, in academic areas, with leisure and recreational activities, and in personal living skills development.

Applications to the College Program for Students with Asperger's Syndrome were accepted for the Fall 2007 semester until February 5, 2007. A record number of applications were received, with interest coming not only from West Virginia but several other states as well. Face-to-face interviews were conducted through March, 2007, and students invited to enroll in the program will begin collaborative planning in early summer.



# RECYCLE and Support the WV ATC!

Now it is easier than ever to support the WV ATC. WV ATC is collecting used, unwanted cell phones, ink jet printer cartridges and laser printer cartridges for recycling. Each donated item recycled will provide additional funding for the WV ATC. The recycled materials are shipped at no cost to you or the center. To assist the WV ATC and receive postage-paid mailing packages, please contact the center at 304-696-2332 or 1-800-344-5115 (WV only).



## Teaching Social Skills, Part II Friendship Skills

By Gloria Sage, Program Coordinator

In Teaching Social Skills, Part I, (Fall/Winter 2006 newsletter) a number of ideas were presented that parents and teachers could use to teach social skills to individuals with autism. This issue will focus on friendship skills and provide ways to help individuals with autism spectrum disorders learn what it means to be a friend and how to make and keep friends.

Research has identified four levels or developmental stages, in the concept and expression of friendship between early childhood and adolescence. What children define as friendly behavior changes as they mature. The conception of friendship for a person with autism often resembles that of a much younger child, and the natural choice of a companion or friend may be someone considerably younger than their chronological age.

This may work out well with young or elementary age children, but may become a problem as students reach adolescence.

In planning what to teach, the starting point should be assessing the friendship skills the individual demonstrates and the skills that are clearly absent. Tony Attwood has developed an Indices of Friendship Observation Schedule that covers fourteen areas and can be used to assess a starting point for individuals with autism. This checklist is available on Tony Attwood's website at: [www.tonyattwood.com](http://www.tonyattwood.com).

The following techniques came from materials developed by Tony Attwood.

### Develop a Friendship Diary:

- List qualities a child has to have to be a good friend
- List examples of when someone was friendly to you

- List examples of when you were friendly to someone
- Match the individual with another person who has the same interests
- Pair the individual with someone who has a complementary skill
- Have individuals work in pairs and/or teams on projects
- Write a Social Story to teach why being friendly is important

Parents and teachers should identify natural instances of friendship by commenting, "That was a friendly thing to do" or ask the individual, "What should a friend do in this situation?" Teachers can make worksheets based on the qualities of friendship. Some examples might be:

- *Everyone likes \_\_\_\_\_ and wants to be her friend because she is \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *Write about the ways \_\_\_\_\_ helps his friends.*
- *Draw a picture of yourself being friendly and helpful. Write about it.*
- *Your best friend is in the hospital. What can you do and say to cheer up your friend?*
- *How do you feel when you're with your best friend?*
- *What do you like to do for your friends?*

Once the individual has made friends, he may need help maintaining the friendships. The person may need to write down or memorize key facts about each friend, so that he has a ready

script of topics of conversation. For example, "How is your dog, Buddy?" or "Have you been swimming at the Y?"

Psychological research has established that similarity is one of the main criteria for selecting friendships. This has led many people with autism, especially Asperger's Syndrome, to find friendships with other people who have the same diagnosis.

Joining clubs or associations based on a person's special interest can provide an opportunity to learn more about the interest and develop friendships. Some examples might be computer clubs, historical societies or amateur astronomers. Internet chat rooms, pen pals, and newsletters for people with autism/Asperger's Syndrome can also provide opportunities to correspond, receive empathy and advice, and make friends. Obviously, internet chat rooms would need to be monitored by parents.

Like any other skill, friendship skills cannot be left to chance for students with autism spectrum disorders. Fortunately, there is a wealth of material available today to help parents and teachers assist individuals in this area. Friendships can offer us deeply rewarding and pleasurable experiences and most people would agree that at least one good friend is crucial to having a positive quality of life.

### References:

Attwood, Tony. (1998) *Asperger's Syndrome: A Guide for Parents and Professionals*. London: Jessica Kingsley Pub. Ltd.

Attwood, Tony. (2006) *The Profile of Friendship Skills in Asperger's Syndrome*. Retrieved 3/2/07 from [www.tonyattwood.com](http://www.tonyattwood.com).

Attwood, Tony and Gray, Carol (N.D.) *Understanding and Teaching Friendship Skills*. Retrieved 3/2/07 from [www.tonyattwood.com](http://www.tonyattwood.com).

## Teaching Social Skills, Part II

### Friendship Skills

Continued from Page - 9

#### Resources:

Baker, Jed B. (2003) *Social Skills Training for Children and Adolescents with Asperger Syndrome and Social-Communications Problems*. Kansas: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

Elman, Natalie and Kennedy-Moore, Eileen. (2003) *The Unwritten Rules of Friendship: Simple Strategies to Help Your Child Make Friends*. Little, Brown & Co.

Grandin, Temple and Barron, Sean, (2005) *Unwritten Rules of Social Relationships*. Arlington, Texas: Future Horizons.

Rubin, Kenneth and Thompson, Andrea. (2002) *The Friendship Factor*. New York: Penguin Books.

Tony Attwood's website has a list of books for children, teens and parents on friendship skills. Go to [www.tonyattwood.com](http://www.tonyattwood.com) and click on "Books on Friendship" and "Resource Materials on Emotions and Friendships."

## WEST VIRGINIA YOUTH DISABILITY CAUCUS

The West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (WVSILC) will host the WV Youth Disability Caucus June 15-18 at the Charleston Marriott Hotel. All youth, ages 16 – 21, with a disability are invited to submit an application to be selected as a delegate to the Caucus.

This is the second WV Youth Disability Caucus and it is designed to expose youth with disabilities to the concept of disability pride, expand knowledge of what a disability is, help delegates set goals, teach them about organizations and systems that exist to support them as people with disabilities, and provide an opportunity to connect with mentors and community leaders. The participants will also learn the legislative process and get hands-on experience in a mock legislative session at the State Capitol.

"The Caucus is a hands-on way to teach youth about power, to have input into policy decisions that affect them and to involve them in the grassroots advocacy efforts in the state and nation," Ann McDaniel WVSILC executive director said.

The skills and information Caucus delegates gain will be used to set goals and make decisions about their futures. Delegates to the first WV Youth Disability Caucus, held in 2005, used the skills and knowledge they gained to write, work, and secure passage of legislation to establish the third week of October as "Disability History Week." This effort resulted in the first such legislation and designation in the country.

"The 2005 delegates set a high bar for this year's group but I am confident they will develop the skills and self-confidence to make their own contribution to their community and state," McDaniel said.

For more information, please call the West Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council at 1-800-642-8207 ext. 4624.



### On-line Autism Certification Coursework

Marshall University offers two on-line courses needed for the autism teaching certificate. Courses available include:

**Fall, 2007 CISP 427/527E Introduction to Autism**

**Spring, 2008 CISP 662E, Instructional Characteristics of Autism**

Also, available during the fall and spring semesters, CISP 664, Practicum in Autism.

To learn more:

[www.marshall.edu/coelatc](http://www.marshall.edu/coelatc)

To register: [www.marshall.edu/registrar](http://www.marshall.edu/registrar)

### WV SUMMER MENTOR TRAINING AVAILABLE

DATES	LOCATION	FOR MORE INFO
June 11,12,17,19	Charleston	304-696-2332
June 18-21	Wheeling	<a href="http://www.wvcpd.org">www.wvcpd.org</a>
July 9, 10, 16, 17	Fairmont	304-363-7642
July 23-26	Inwood	<a href="http://www.wvcpd.org">www.wvcpd.org</a>
July 30, 31/Aug 6, 7	Charleston	304-696-2332
July 30, 31/Aug 6, 7	Beckley	304-696-2332

## From the Chair of the Advisory Board...

By Jeanne Elkins, Chair

As the newly elected Chair of the Advisory Board, I am excited to work with such a visionary group of family members, dedicated professionals and invested community members. Our current Board is unified in its determination to do all it can to eliminate the ATC wait list for families. Our family members serving on the board realize from their own experiences that we simply cannot continue to see time and opportunity pass by the lives of so many individuals in our state.

I just returned from Washington, DC where I attended the 2007 Disability Policy Seminar as a member of the WV Developmental Disabilities council along with Steve Wiseman, Executive Director of the Council. During the second evening of the Seminar, I attended a panel presentation on the Combating Autism Act and additional related legislation to be proposed by Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY). The funds have still not been appropriated for the Combating Autism Legislation. I was very encouraged to hear of the Autism Support Act bill to be introduced in late March by Senator Clinton this session. As the bill was explained by Ann Gavaghan, staff person for Senator Clinton, it has tremendous potential to complement and enhance the Combating Autism Bill by focusing on increasing services and best practices. The bill also provides opportunities for demonstration grants for adult autism service provision. I urge all groups and families to keep current on the progress of this legislation and be pro-active in contacting representatives about the incredible potential it has to change lives in West Virginia. I hope all organizations in West Virginia will pull together in an all out effort to see this bill pass with adequate funding appropriated. The Advisory Board will do all it can to get information to the specific disability and autism groups in West Virginia to make our voices heard.

Recommendations from the fact sheet taken by Seminar participants to Congress members were that the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress should:

- Provide the necessary funds to focus on our country's researchers on explaining the apparent increase in prevalence, on finding the causes, and on determining the most effective ways of supporting children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders by fully funding the Combating Autism Act; and
- Support legislation that addresses the direct service and training needs associated with this increasing number of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

I was very encouraged by the significant buy-in from other national disability coalitions regarding this legislation in anticipation of the effect it could have on all individuals with disabilities. We cannot fail here in West Virginia to value that contribution and make an all-out attempt to see these efforts succeed.

### Family Coaching Sessions a Big Hit

Family Coaching Sessions are short one-on-one coaching sessions regarding everyday issues faced by families raising a child with autism. Family Coaching Sessions are provided by phone **at no cost** to families registered with the WV Autism Training Center.

Examples of Family Coaching topics include:

- Individualized Education Plan Checklist: How the Special Educational Cycle Works
- Case Management and the Individualized Service Plan (ISP)
- Public Services and Benefits
- Life Planning and Guardianship



Family coaching sessions are very popular among WV ATC families. In the past year, 128 family coaching sessions were conducted.

If you are interested in any of the Family Coaching Sessions, please contact the Parent Support Coordinator, Angela Bryson at 1-800-344-5115 or 696-2332 (local).

## My Peer Mentoring Experience



By Taylor Ramey, Student

My name is Taylor Ramey and I am a senior at Webster County High School. We have a community service program at the high school and I go to Glade Elementary to help my mom in her classroom.

I have had the pleasure of working with Jacob while I have been doing my community service. Sometimes he has difficulty transitioning from his mom to school, but I have made it easier by finding things for us to do together. We have fun reading his book and working on the computer. When he is reluctant to do his work I try to make it fun by making a game out of it.

When my mom talked about Asperger's Disorder I didn't really understand what it was, but since I have started working with Jacob, I have come to understand some of what Asperger's is all about. When my community service is up and I graduate, I will miss my time with Jacob. He has definitely found a place in my heart.



## WV Positive Behavior Support Network Recognized Nationally

By Jennifer McFarland-Whisman,  
Associate Director / Training

The WV PBS (WV PBS) Network is a collaborative, grassroots effort with approximately 70 members representing a variety of agencies and constituents. Members include the Autism Training Center, Center for Excellence in Disabilities, Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Resources, Developmental Disabilities Council, university faculty, school systems, behavioral health centers, parents, and advocates.

The WV PBS Network recently was established by the Association for Positive Behavior Support (APBS) as the **first** official APBS State Network. The WV PBS Network will work closely with APBS to promote the philosophy and practice of PBS in WV.

This past year the WV PBS Network developed an Overview of Positive Behavior Support DVD and accompanying facilitator and participant manuals. These materials were distributed to behavioral health centers, university faculty, Parent Resource Centers and others providing information about PBS. The DVD and accompanying materials are available free of charge to anyone interested in teaching and facilitating a PBS overview.

Beyond the development of the DVD, future goals and plans of the network include:

- Developing a stand-alone graduate level course in PBS

at a local university.

- Encouraging university faculty to incorporate PBS into existing coursework.
- Developing a statewide credentialing system for PBS facilitators.
- Assisting a variety of agencies in adopting and implementing PBS.

To learn more:

[www.as.wvu.edu/wvpbs/](http://www.as.wvu.edu/wvpbs/)



DUKE center for  
HUMAN GENETICS

## Research to Find the Genetic Factors in ASD

The Duke Center for Human Genetics (CHG) is conducting research into the genetics of autism and related disorders. The goal of these research efforts is to discover the genetic factors that contribute to the cause of autism and related disorders.

Please join us in our research efforts to find the gene(s) that contribute to autism spectrum disorders. In order to detect these genes, many families are needed to participate in this study.

For more information in the WV, OH and KY area:

Scott Short at: 1-866-308-3032 or  
[scott.short@duke.edu](mailto:scott.short@duke.edu)

Duke CHG at:



Duke Center for Human Genetics  
DUKE UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

Save the Date



## The Autism Society of West Virginia Annual Conference

AUGUST 2007						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

**August 10 & 11, 2007**

Holiday Inn Charleston House  
Charleston, West Virginia



**REGISTRATION NOW  
AVAILABLE ONLINE !**

**[www.regonline.com/aswv2007](http://www.regonline.com/aswv2007)**

**\$135 through May 31st      \$150 from June 1 to August 5th**  
**Online Registration Closes August 5th**

**\$175 at the door**

**Single Day Rates Available – Please See Conference Website**

**Don't miss these national speakers and many other excellent presenters**

**Dr. Temple Grandin**

Inarguably the most accomplished and well-known adult with autism in the world.

**Linda Hodgdon**

A Speech Pathologist and author who has specialized in addressing the communication needs of students with autism.

**Dennis Debbaudt**

The world's leading autism authority on the development of curriculum training tools and techniques for law enforcement professionals.

**Ingrid Kanics**

An occupational therapist specializing in sensory integration and sensory camps

**Banquet Keynote Speakers**

**Dr. Ruth C. Sullivan**

A pioneer in the world of autism services

**Kathie Snow**

Disabilities advocate emphasizing people first language

**For more information or to register by phone call the WV Autism Training Center at 304 696 2332**  
Stipends will be available to defray costs for residents of West Virginia with developmental disabilities and their families. These stipends are made possible through a generous grant from  
The WV Developmental Disabilities Council



## Don't Miss These Upcoming Conferences

### Association for Behavior Analysis

May 25-29, 2007

San Diego, CA

[www.abainternational.org](http://www.abainternational.org)

### Together a Brighter Tomorrow

Autism Society of America

July 11-14, 2007

Phoenix, AZ

[www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)

### First Annual NATTAP Conference (NATTAP)

Network of Autism Training and Technical Assistance Programs

Conference Sponsored by the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence

September 26-28, 2007

Columbus, OH

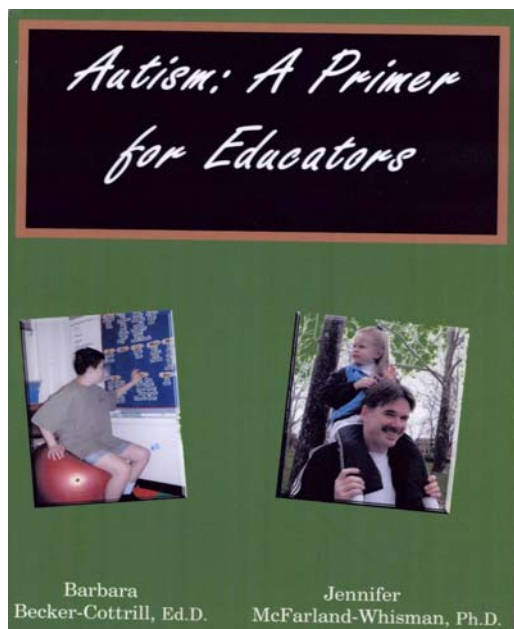
[www.ocali.org](http://www.ocali.org)



**WV Autism Training Center, MU**  
College of Education & Human Services  
One John Marshall Drive  
Huntington, WV 25755-2430

# Available Soon!

## "Autism: A Primer for Educators"



By:

**Dr. Barbara Becker-Cottrill and**

**Dr. Jennifer McFarland-Whisman**

Phone: 304-696-2332

Phone Toll Free (WV Only): 1-800-344-5115

Fax: 304-696-2846

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